

Message Text

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FM AMCONSUL TORONTO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3005

INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

ALL CANADIAN CONSULATE VIA POUCH

UNCLAS TORONTO 1301

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: POL

SUBJECT: ONTARIO ELECTION

1. SUMMARY: AS THE SEPTEMBER 18 ELECTION DRAWS NEAR, MOST FORECASTERS CONTINUE TO PREDICT THAT THE PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVES WILL OBTAIN A MAJORITY IN THE PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE.

2. DESPITE GENERAL ECONOMIC DISCONTENT AND A REDISTRIBUTION OF SEATS (WITH 8 ADDED TO MAKE 125 IN THE NEW PARLIAMENT), MAJORITY OPINION HERE BELIEVES NO ISSUE OR FACTOR HAS EMERGED AS STRONG ENOUGH TO DISPLACE THE TORIES 32 YEAR OLD HOLD ON QUEENS PARK (SITE OF PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT). EVEN TORONTO STAR WHICH SUPPOORTING LIBERALS EDITORIALY QUALIFIES LIBERAL VICTORY PREDICTION IN LATEST POLL BY HEADLINE SAYING "STAR POLL SHOWS 41 PERCENT WON'T SAY OR UNSURE HOW THEY WILL VOTE." A HIGHLY PLACED SOURCE IN PREMIER DAVIS' OFFICE SAID THAT HIS PARTY FELT THAT THE NDP WAS LOSING STRENGTH AND AS 4 OF 5 NDP VOTERS GO LIBERAL WHEN THEY SWITCH, THE CONSERVATIVES WERE CONCERNED. HOWEVER, THE MEDIA SEEMS TO VIEW THE NDP AS WAGING A GOOD CAMPAIGN AND GAINING SUPPORT AS THE PARTY OFFERING THE ONLY REAL ISSUES - HOUSING, INFLATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT - TO CHALLENGE PC DOMINATION OF THE PROVINCE. THE NDP ITSELF IS APPARENTLY OPTIMISTIC OF MAKING GAINS IN NORTHERN ONTARIO. THE CHANGING COMPOSITION

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OF METRO TORONTO WITH THE HEAVY IMMIGRATION OF RECENT YEARS IS EXPECTED TO COUNT IN FAVOR OF TORIES: MOST ETHNIC NEWSPAPERS

ENDORSE PCS AND IMMIGRANTS ARE MOSTLY "CONSERVATIVE" IN ETHOS
AND SUPPORTIVE OF STATUS QUO IN GOVERNMENT.

3. THE LIBERAL PARTY IS CONSIDERED SO BADLY ORGANIZED ON
PROVINCIAL LEVEL THAT GOOD CANDIDATES ARE NOT RUNNING AND PC
CANADIDATES IN INDIVIDUAL RIDINGS ARE CONSIDERED BETTER
QUALIFIED.

4. UNDERLYING THE WHOLE CAMPAIGN IS PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT'S
HOSTILITY TOWARDS OTTAWA OVER TAXATION POLICY AND SHARING OF
RESPONSIBILITIES. THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S ENERGY/FUEL POLICIES
HAVE HIT ONTARIO HARDEST OF PROVINCES AND DAVIS IS PLAYING ON
VOTERS' UNEASINESS THAT IF NIXON LIBERALS ARE GIVEN MAJORITY,
QUEENS PARK WILL BE LESS EFFECTIVE IN RESISTING OTTAWA'S
ENCROACHMENT ON INTERESTS OF PROVINCE.

5. COMMENT: OF THE 117 RIDINGS IN THE 1971 ELECTION,
LIBERAL CANADIDATES WON LESS THAN 20 PERCENT OF THE VOTES IN
29 RIDINGS AND THE NDP IN 34. THERE WERE ONLY 4 RIDINGS
WHERE TORY CANDIDATES TOOK LESS THAN 20 PERCENT OF VOTE WHILE
THEY RECEIVED 50 PERCENT OR MORE OF VOTE IN 37 RIDINGS AND THE
LIBERALS IN ONLY 9. THIS BASIC WEAKNESS OF BOTH OPPOSITION
PARTIES IN INDIVIDUAL RIDINGS SUGGESTS THAT NEITHER OF
THESE PARTIES CAN HOPE TO WIN A MAJORITY OF THE SEATS. THUS
THE QUESTION BECOMES WILL THE PC OBTAIN A MAJORITY AGAIN.
THE CONSENSUS IS THAT IT WILL.
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